Production of AWACS by India

*5. SHRIMATI SURYAKANTHA JAYAWANTRAO PATIL:

SHRI KAPIL VERMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Defence Research and Development Organisation is working on the production of an Indian version of Airborne Early Warning and Control System (AWACS);

(b) if so, when was the project started;

(c) what progress has been made so far;

(d) the amount of money svent so far on the project;

(e) whether Government are facing any bottlenecks in this regard; if so, what are the details thereof; and

(f) by when the project is likely to be completed and what would be its total cost?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (DR. RAJA RAMANNA): (a) No, Sir. However DRDO is presently engaged in competence development activity in the field of AEW technology.

(b) to (f) Do not arise.

Death of Scientists in Antarctica

*6. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:

CHOWDHRY HARI SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that four of our scientists in the Ninth Indian Antarctica Expedition died recently under unusual circumstances during the course of their expedition, in the field camps;

(b) if so, whether any inquiry into the circumstances leading to their deaths has been held; if so, the outcome thereof and the action taken by Government in the matter and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to prevent such incidents in future Antarctca Expeditions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (PROF. M. G. K. MENON): (a) Yes, Sir. Four members of the Ninth Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica (three geo-scientists and a technical person from the Indian Navy) died on 7/8th January 1990 in a field camp in Antarctica.

(b) Yes, Sir. The circumstances leading to the deaths have been investigated by a Committee. The post-mortem was carried out by the Department of Forensic Medicine, Safdarjung Hospital on 16th February 1990. The immediate cause of death is believed to be poisoned by carbon monoxide produced by a 4.5 KW Honda generator which had apparently been running in the living tent for 4-5 hours before it was switched off when the deceased prepared to go to sleep. The Government of India arranged to bring back the bodies from Antarctica by air and handed them over to the next of kin of the deceased for cremation after the conduct of medico-legal post-mortem.

(c) The existing safety rules for survival in Antarctica are very specific and repeatedly emphasised upon members of the expeditions. This will be done even more emphatically in the future.